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I want each of you here today to know just how much I appreciate your serving as members of this advisory board on research and extension. Each of you brings a special degree of competence and insight to the review process. We may not entirely agree on the need for certain programs, but we do agree that research and extension are absolutely necessary to ensure the future productivity of American agriculture.

In recent weeks I have talked to many diverse groups about beginning a dialogue on the future of American agriculture and the implications our policies have for the future structure of farming and our family farm system. We must not confine this dialogue entirely to commodity policy. We must conduct this dialogue within the context of our nation's food and fiber system. I want our land grant university research and extension people, as well as other researchers across the Nation involved in this dialogue from its very outset. It is the research and creativity of the past which has given our nation its tremendous food and fiber capacity.

Yet, there remain a number of questions that we must ask ourselves about the importance of research to society as a whole. Are research benefits directed disproportionately toward a particular size of farm? Can productivity be increased substantially in the next five or ten years? If it can, will farmers have to be larger to take advantage of these new breakthroughs? Is research underway to help small farmers to compete effectively in 1985 or 1990? What are the research projects, currently in progress, that can lead to new reductions in food price inflation? What are the tradeoffs between "efficiency" and "social" costs? These are just a few of the questions that I believe the research community must address before the 1981 farm bill is debated in Congress.

Introductory remarks prepared for delivery by Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland before the National Agricultural Research and Extension Users Advisory Board Luncheon at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., May 1, 1979.

Another issue which needs your attention is helping communicate not only the results of research and extension to the general public, but also the costs of these efforts. Research has a cost that can be staggering. A good case can be made to the public for a research budget, if the research is perceived as responsive to public needs, and the public understands this.

These advisory committees with their broader representation are a vital first step in increasing the communication between the research community and the general public. Communicate with the public-at-large, so that it can begin to benefit from research in the same way and to the same degree that farmers have for decades.

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